



Partnerships

OWOW has broadened its impact and effectiveness by reaching out to work in partnership with the public and private sectors. Today, more than ever, OWOW recognizes that it must involve everyone—other government agencies, businesses, communities, and individuals—to meet its environmental goals.

Many agencies and organizations have increased their commitment to ensure that they and their members do the right thing to protect water quality. OWOW has financially and actively supported a number of these voluntary efforts, including the golf industry's development of *Golf and the Environment: Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States* (see box), the ski industry's new Environmental Charter, the U.S. Post Office's new *Beneficial Site and Landscape Guidelines*, and best management practice handbooks by the pork and wheat industries.

Green Ports/Green Ships Programs

Through the Green Ports and Green Ships Programs, OWOW has successfully promoted environmental stewardship concepts for U.S. ports. Under the Green Ports Program, OWOW helped the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) produce an environmental handbook that helps port managers implement environmentally sound practices to address potential sources of water and air pollution and to manage solid and hazardous waste. Under the Green Ships Program, EPA funded the Chamber of Shipping of America to produce a handbook for vessels that provides the shipping industry with

environmentally friendly ship operation practices and complements the AAPA handbook.

NACo/ICMA

OWOW's partnerships with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) have helped build local government officials' awareness of watershed protection issues. Since 1995, OWOW has supported wetland and watershed workshops at NACo and ICMA's biannual national meetings and have trained over 2,000 local government officials. EPA supported NACo and ICMA in the publication of wetland and watershed case studies and has distributed these case studies to more than 2,000 local government officials and watershed associations. EPA has also used NACo's network of county officials and managers to share information on community-based coastal initiatives, such as wellhead protection and agricultural water reuse programs.

Golf and the Environment

In 1995 OWOW became involved in the multisector Golf and Environment initiative to catalyze and support voluntary environmental improvements in the golf industry. The goal is to help the industry become a model through continued cooperation in environmental stewardship and public education. Accomplishments include development of a set of guiding *Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States*, design and implementation of an environmental performance measurement pilot project, preparation of a collaboration guide to facilitate planning and partnership at the local level, and development of siting guidelines for golf course developers and local governments. In addition, the group sponsors national conferences to share information and ideas on golf and the environment.

Wildlife Habitat Council

OWOW has been a partner with the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) for many years. WHC has had numerous successes in helping large landowners, particularly corporations, manage their unused lands in an ecologically sensitive manner for the benefit of wildlife. More than 105 companies are WHC members, as are two dozen conservation organizations. More than 550,000 acres in 43 states, Puerto Rico, and eight other countries are managed for wildlife through WHC-assisted projects—cooperative efforts involving management, employees, community members, local conservation groups, and local, state, and federal agencies.

OWOW and WHC have adopted two (in 1995 and 2001) Memoranda of Understanding to further their common interests. They have worked together on such projects as the Cooper River (South Carolina) Corridor Project and the St. Clair River (Michigan) Waterways for Wildlife project. These projects involved partnerships with companies like Amoco, Bayer DuPont, and Ford, as well as conservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited.

Each year OWOW supports WHC's Wildlife Symposium, which brings together representatives from wildlife conservation groups, industry, and the community to share information and their enthusiasm about enhancing and restoring wildlife habitat at corporate sites. In 2001 WHC announced a record number of more than 1.2 million acres being managed for wildlife. WHC is also a partner with OWOW in the Five-Star Restoration Program, which brings together citizen groups, corporations, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, and government agencies to restore streambanks and wetlands and enables community-based restoration projects.

Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials

Thanks to OWOW's partnership with the Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Project at the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension, scores of towns and communities across the country are examining how their local land use plans, regulations and practices can better protect water resources. NEMO uses state-of-the-art GIS and remote sensing to help community decision-makers and landowners better understand the relationship between their activities and water resources. NEMO training workshops for EPA's National Estuary Programs have led to the creation of local coalitions to examine the effects of growth on quality of life and natural resources, reviews of local ordinances, and build-out analyses. In addition to providing financial support, OWOW serves as member of NEMO's interagency advisory group.

Know Your Watershed

Beginning in 1993, OWOW teamed up with the Conservation Technology Information

Center to launch a campaign to encourage rural and agricultural communities to play an active role in managing their watersheds. Over the past seven

years, the "Know Your Watershed" campaign has built a national partnership of agricultural commodity groups, farm organizations, agricultural retailers, in-

dustry, and others to address the conservation of natural resources, watershed protection, and nonpoint source pollution. In addition to developing many highly popular booklets and a video about getting started on local watershed projects, "Know Your Watershed" has been a great vehicle for disseminating information about water quality as well as wetlands and source waters. A new Core 4 project offers solid, science-based information for farmers



on ways to implement practices to conserve natural resources, such as weed and pest management, conservation buffers, and conservation tillage.

Center for Marine Conservation

Since 1986 OWOW has partnered with the Center for



Marine Conservation (CMC) to establish and maintain the annual International Coastal Cleanup Campaign (ICCC). The ICCC is the largest volunteer environmental stewardship activity in the world. In 1999, more than 770,000 volunteers, including 11,142 divers, from 78 countries cleaned up over 4,290 tons of trash from 11,361 miles of shoreline and underwater sites. EPA also has partnered with CMC to develop the statistically based National



Marine Debris Monitoring Program, in which volunteers gather scientifically valid marine debris data. Currently, 162 monitoring sites are established, and at 128 of them data are being collected. Eventually there will be 180 monitoring sites in the contiguous United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Girl Scouts of the United States of America

In 1999 OWOW partnered with the Girl Scouts of the United States of America to establish a new **Water Drop Patch Program**. To date, more than 6,000 girl scouts nationwide have earned patches by completing watershed stewardship activities. The project recently received an award from the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation for excellence in environmental education. OWOW also participates in an interagency effort, "Linking Girls to the Land," to promote hands-on conservation activities for thousands of girl scouts.



Federal Agency Collaboration Coastal America

The Coastal America partnership, of which EPA is a charter member, was established in 1992 to provide a forum for interagency collaboration to leverage the authorities, expertise, and resources of each member agency to address the problems of habitat loss and degradation, nonpoint source pollution, and contaminated sediments in the coastal environment. OWOW serves on both the National Implementation Team and the Education and Outreach Committee.

Recently, Coastal America has launched several innovative partnerships to help further its protection and restoration goals. The Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center network links major aquariums around the country with federal agencies to increase public awareness and involvement in



U.S. Coral Reef Task Force

Coral reefs and their associated communities of seagrasses, mangroves, and mudflats are sensitive indicators of water quality and the ecological integrity of the ecosystem. They are important fishery and nursery areas and recently have proved to be very important economically as tourist attractions. Reefs also provide protection from erosion. And, like rain forests, coral reefs may hold the key to new cures and vaccines.

OWOW has led EPA's participation in the Coral Reef Task Force, which is charged under the new Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 to coordinate federal research, preservation, and restoration activities to protect coral reef ecosystems. On March 2, 2000, the Task Force issued the *National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs*. The action plan is being implemented by several working groups to the Task Force, one of which, the Water & Air Quality Working Group, is chaired by EPA. Major accomplishments of the Working Group to date include clarification by EPA and the Corps of Engineers of the protection provided under the Clean Water Act and other laws for activities that affect coral reefs, establishment of special conditions in Clean Water Act section 404 general permits for protecting coral reefs, creation of a volunteer diver reef monitoring program in the Caribbean, and increased interagency coordination and technical assistance to address the impacts of sediments and nutrients on coral reef ecosystems.

coastal resource protection and restoration. The military's Innovative Readiness Training Program links the training needs of the armed forces with coastal ecosystem restoration needs. Military units have been involved in several Coastal America projects to date, including the removal of decommissioned dams to restore spawning habitat for anadromous fish populations. The National Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership is a voluntary private-public partnership in which corporations join with federal and state agencies to restore wetlands and other aquatic habitats. Since its inception, Coastal America has sponsored more than 500 restoration and protection projects around the country.



Wetlands Interagency Working Group

During the early 1990s, wetland programs were criticized as unduly complex, inconsistent, burdensome, and even ineffective. An interagency work group met to consider how to improve and streamline federal wetland programs. In August 1993 the work group identified more than 40 improvements designed to make the federal programs more "fair, flexible, and effective." Major themes included reliance on sound science in the decision-making process and increased coordination with state, local, and

tribal efforts. The group's efforts led to a groundbreaking 1995 National Academy of Sciences study on the identification and delineation of wetlands. Another major accomplishment was the creation of an administrative appeals process to allow landowners to appeal wetland delineations and permit denials without costly and time-consuming judicial proceedings. In addition, streamlined permitting was offered for small business expansions and homeowners. To simplify wetland identifications for the nation's farmers, the agencies agreed to rely on a single wetland determination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on farmlands for both Food Security Act and Clean Water Act programs.

National Dredging Team

OWOW serves on the National Dredging Team (NDT), an interagency effort established in 1995 to promote national and regional consistency on dredging issues and to provide a forum for conflict resolution and information exchange early in the dredging process. Since 1995 the NDT has established nine Regional Dredging Teams (RDTs). The NDT has also developed and issued guidance on the creation of Local Planning Groups, or LPGs, (in 1998) and on the procedures for elevating issues from RDTs and LPGs to the NDT (in 1999). The NDT sponsored a workshop in 1999 to address Coastal Zone Management Act consistency issues involved in the dredging process and sponsored a major conference in 2001 to address future challenges in the dredging program.

American Heritage Rivers

The American Heritage Rivers Initiative is an innovative effort to foster improvements in environmental protection and natural resource conservation, historic and cultural preservation, and economic revitalization in river communities. Without any new regulations on private property owners or state, local, and tribal governments, the program is about making more efficient and effective use of existing federal resources, cutting red tape, and lending a helping hand. OWOW has been instrumental in developing and supporting the American Heritage Rivers Initiative.

The Clean Water Action Plan: A New Watershed Framework

Beginning in 1998, nine federal agencies joined with state, tribal, and local partners to identify 111 key actions to protect and restore the nation's waters and to build a new watershed framework for coordinating their plans and programs. Among some of the accomplishments under the *Clean Water Action Plan* was the development of Unified Watershed Assessments. All 56 states and territories, the District of Columbia, and more than 80 tribes submitted these comprehensive assessments of watershed health. More than 300 Watershed Restoration Action Strategies are in various stages of implementation to coordinate efforts to reduce pollution, protect natural resources, and restore wetlands and riparian zones. OWOW has played a major role in other collaborative efforts, including:

- **Coastal Monitoring Strategy**
A new *Coastal Research and Monitoring Strategy* issued in September 2000 presents a basic assessment of the nation's coastal research and monitoring needs and recommends an integrated framework to protect vital coastal resources. The *Strategy* reflects input from a wide range of groups and individuals, including nongovernment organizations, state and local governments, tribes, the research community, and other interests.
- **National Coastal Condition Report**
The first-ever *National Coastal Condition Report* will present a broad baseline picture of the condition of coastal waters. In 2000 EPA, along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Geological Survey, issued a public and peer-reviewed draft for comment. When the final report is issued at the end of FY2001, it will provide national-level coastal assessment information on water quality, sediment quality, biota, habitat, ecosystem integrity, and public health. The report will serve as a useful benchmark for analyzing the future progress of coastal management programs.



Partners in Flight and Migratory Bird Conservation

As a logical extension of its work in protecting natural ecosystems and their associated wildlife, OWOW became involved in bird conservation efforts in the early 1990s. The primary focus was the broad coalition Partners in Flight, which formed around a widespread concern that populations of bird species that breed in North America but winter in Latin America were in steep decline. OWOW joined scores of other federal agencies, states, nongovernment organizations, academic institutions, and the forest products industry in a concerted effort to better define the problems faced by these “neotropical migrant” bird species and to begin to fashion solutions that draw on the combined expertise, authorities, energies, and resources of all of the partners.

By the mid-1990s, OWOW had moved into a leadership role in representing EPA in Partners in Flight and began to broaden its efforts into other bird conservation initiatives and activities, working in close cooperation with people from many parts of the Agency. In the late 1990s, Partners in Flight expanded its scope of concern to include all land birds and played a key role in establishing an all-bird-species conservation initiative that included Mexico and Canada, known as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). Partners in Flight and similar initiatives for shorebirds, waterfowl, and colonial waterbirds focus on developing conservation objectives, grounded in science and tailored to the continent's diverse ecosystems, and on developing the technical tools needed for monitoring and habitat management. NABCI builds on these in establishing institutional mechanisms with needed resources for the delivery of on-the-ground conservation action. OWOW has also played a leadership role in NABCI and has provided critical support to bird conservation through funding, helping to establish links among interested parties, providing information on bird conservation to EPA programs, establishing a comprehensive bird conservation web site (www.epa.gov/OWOW/birds), and other assistance.

EPA serves on the federal Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds established to coordinate activities under Executive Order 13186. This is an expansion of the role EPA has played under the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act, serving on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which acquires and restores wetland habitat.